

MINUTE of MEETING of the SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 20 FEBRUARY 2018.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair), Andrew McGuire, Alison Adamson, Frank Anderson, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Peter Heggie, John McGinty

In Attendance – Jessie Duncan (Tenants Panel Representative)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

- (a) The Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 12 December 2018. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising – West Lothian Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2017

The Panel was informed that the consultation had ended on 20 December 2017 and there were no material changes to the Plan arising from the consultation process.

- (b) The Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 19 December 2017. The minute was then signed by the Chair.
- (c) The Services for the Community Policy Development Scrutiny Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 6 February 2018. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

3. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE TRANSFORMATION: PRESENTATION

Officers from Scottish Fire and Rescue Services had been invited to attend the meeting to provide an overview of the planned transformation of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Area Manager David Lockhart presented slides which explained that the need to transform was based on the following:-

- Delivery model served SFRS well, but designed for risks of 70 years ago

- Firefighters not universally trained or equipped to meet new risks
- Service could operate more efficiently, more effectively and more flexibly
- RDS needed a stronger delivery model.

The Panel was informed that a number of key issues would be looked at, and these included the locations of stations, people and equipment.

The vision for a transformed SFRS would include:

- Firefighters trained and equipped for a new, broader role
- More effective operating and crewing models
- Infrastructure and equipment better aligned to today's need
- Improved safety through the use of the latest technologies.

In addition to the current role, firefighters would take on:

Emergency Medical Response
Multi-agency Response (terrorism)
Responding to environmental events
Wider safe and well prevention work
Broader youth intervention
Inspection and enforcement

The Area Manager advised that a proposal letter concerning the new role for firefighters had been sent to all firefighters on 30 January 2017. He considered that this represented a significantly improved package and new terms and conditions. The detail would be negotiated through collective bargaining arrangements.

A table within the presentation showed the pay elements which made up the proposal.

Finally, the presentation provided details of the public consultation which would run for 90 days and had commenced the previous week.

The Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services then informed the Panel that a report on the consultation would be brought to a future meeting of the Panel and thereafter to the Council Executive for approval.

Decision

To note the terms of the presentation.

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services updating the Panel on the Local Plan Performance for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in West Lothian for the period 1 October 2017 to 31 December 2017.

The seven objectives contained in the local Fire and Rescue Service Plan for 2014-17 were set out in the report. SFRS officers Martin Riach and Ritchie Hall presented the report and highlighted a number of improvements in the reporting period compared to previous years. An appendix provided the Panel with additional information on action under each objective during the reporting period.

The Panel was informed that there had been an increase of 34% in accidental dwelling fires in the year to date period, compared to the same reporting period in 2016/17, however, there had been a marked decrease from Q2 to Q3 2017/18 with a reduction of 13%. The five year trendline for West Lothian continued on a downward trajectory and SFRS would work hard to maintain this going forward. The report provided detailed information relating to these incidents.

In relation to deliberate fires, it was reported that there had been an increase of 16% in deliberate fires YTD during 2017/18 when compared to the same reporting period in 2016/17. The 5 year trendline for West Lothian showed a slight upward trajectory. This trendline based upon deliberate Fire Setting /10,000 population was similar to the trend across Scotland. The service would continue to seek out new opportunities to reduce the occurrence of deliberate fires.

Questions raised by Panel members were then dealt with SFRS officers. The Panel noted that, in relation to fires involving wheelie bins, joint work with Police Scotland had resulted in one person being charged.

The Panel was asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

4. SCRUTINY OF POLICE SCOTLAND PERFORMANCE IN WEST LOTHIAN

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an update on the performance of Police Scotland in West Lothian for the period 1 October to 31 December 2017.

The report explained that the Police Scotland Strategic Plan set out the local Policing priorities and objectives for West Lothian and was a statutory requirement of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. The Council Executive had agreed that the monitoring of performance against the plans would be reported and considered on a quarterly basis by the panel.

The report enclosed a copy of the scrutiny report for Quarter 3 2017/19.

Chief Superintendent Lesley Clark and Sergeant Liz McLeod presented the report and amplified aspects of the statistical information contained therein and described a variety of actions being taken by Police Scotland.

The Panel was informed that the format of the report had changed and Panel members commented that they welcomed the new format. The Chair commented that it would be useful to see the statistical information at ward level.

The Panel was asked to note the contents of the report covering the period 1 October 2017 to 31 December 2017.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

6. POLICE SCOTLAND 2018/19 ANNUAL POLICE PLAN - CONSULTATION

A reported had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing panel members of the consultation process on the proposed strategic policing priorities as set out in the Police Scotland 2018/19 Annual Police Plan.

The report explained that West Lothian Council had been invited to participate in the consultation process which concluded on 21 February 2018.

The report outlined Police Scotland priorities for 2018/19 as follows:-

- Violence, disorder and antisocial behaviour
- Serious organised crime
- Counter terrorism and domestic extremism
- Protecting people at risk of harm
- Road safety and road crime
- Acquisitive crime

Appendix A to the report set out the proposed response to the consultation questions.

The Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services provided an update, explaining that the consultation response had been approved by Council Executive earlier in the day. It had been the intention to take the report to the Council Executive after consideration by the Panel , but this had not been possible due to the timescale for submission of responses

to the consultation.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing panel members on the strategic development of Community Safety in West Lothian and other local and national developments. In addition, the report included the performance information from the Community Safety Unit on the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT).

The report provided details of three local initiatives. These were:-

- 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign
- Bystander Training
- Operation Jingle

In relation to national updates, the Panel was informed of a number of initiatives. These included:-

- Hate Crime Campaign
- Action for Terrorism (ACT)
- The Year of Young People
- Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) for Alcohol
- Combined Drug and Alcohol Treatment Strategy
- Fairer Scotland Action Plan
- Cyber Resilience Action Plan

Appendix 1 to the report examined performance from the Safer Neighbourhood team.

The Panel was asked to note the developments of partnership working in the field of community safety and to note the performance information detailed for the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. PROPERTY TURNOVER OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2017

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing the Panel of the property turnover for the Quarter 1 October to 31 December 2017.

Details of all lets and property numbers for the quarter were provided in Appendix 1 and Council Stock figures by ward in Appendix 3. The main points were:-

- Whitburn with 30 lets, Broxburn with 28 lets and Armadale with 28 lets had the highest percentage of total lets.
- There were 8 sheltered housing properties let.
- Six communities had only one mainstream property available to let.
- Six communities had between two and four properties available to let.
- Seventeen communities had no properties becoming available.

The Panel was asked to note the current levels of activity relating to property turnover for the third quarter of 2017/18 and in particular to note:-

1. That there had been an increase in property lets compared to the same period in the previous year.
2. That of the 47 communities in West Lothian, 6 had only 1 mainstream property to let and 18 had no one.
3. That 65% of lets had been allocated to people who were homeless or potentially homeless.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. RENT PRESSURE ZONES

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an update on Scottish Government guidance on rent pressure zones.

The report explained that Scottish Government guidance for RPZs stated that councils could apply to Scottish Ministers to have an area designated as an RPZ if they could prove that:

- rents payable within the proposed RPZ were rising by too much;
- the rent rises within the proposed RPZ were causing undue hardship to tenants
- the local authority within whose area the proposed zone lay was

coming under increasing pressure to provide housing or subsidise the cost of housing as a consequence of the rent rises within the proposed zone.

The rent cap in rent pressure zones must be at least 1% above the Consumer Price Index. A higher increase was allowed for properties that had undergone improvement works. Where the RPZ was applied, the cap could last for up to five years and would only apply to tenants who had private residential tenancies. The cap, if applied would only affect rent rises once tenancies had started. Initial rents for new tenancies were not affected by the cap and would continue to be market-led.

The report went on to examine the guidance published by the Scottish Government which set out the evidence that local authorities would have to submit to make an application of a RPZ.

The Panel was informed that City of Edinburgh Council was proposing a collaborative approach to enable other local authorities, COSLA and the Scottish Government to agree a shared methodology for identifying and designating RPZs. This would include exploring the development of a consistent approach to collating verifiable data on rents. They were considering commissioning further research on the link between localities, rents and incomes. Officers would explore if there was potential to work collaboratively with the City of Edinburgh Council and others on this piece of work.

Finally, it was noted that as the new Private Residential Tenancy only came into effect on 1 December 2017, there would at present be no information available on how existing rents had increased. Such information was unlikely to be available until early in 2019.

The Panel was requested to:-

1. note that Scottish Government had now published rent pressure zone (RPZ) guidance;
2. note that an application for a rent pressure zone required specialist evidence on the actual rents that existing Private Residential Tenancy tenants were paying in the private rented sector. This evidence was not currently collected by the council and there was at present no budget identified for gathering the information;
3. note that there might be an opportunity to participate with other local authorities, COSLA and the Scottish Government to develop a shared methodology for gathering evidence that complied with the requirements of government guidance to support rent pressure zone proposals; and
4. note that a further report on the private sector rents in West Lothian would be reported to the panel in 2019.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

10. UPDATE ON HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMMES FOR SCOTLAND:AREA BASED SCHEMES (HEEPS:ABS) 2017/18 AND 2018/19

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an update on the progress made for the 2017/18 HEEPS:ABS programme of External Wall Insulation and advising of proposals for the 2018/19 programme.

The report explained that HHEP: ABS funding sources were:-

- HEEPS:ABS
- Energy Company Obligation (ECO)
- Warmer Home Scotland (WHS)
- Home Owners Contribution
- WLC Capital Funding

The report provided details of each of these funding sources.

For 2017/18 the council had been awarded £979,589 HEEPS:ABS funding which was being used to target privately owned properties of No Fines construction and would be fully spent in:

Erskine and Gordon Way – Knightsridge
Woodend Walk- Armadale
Nelson Avenue - Howden

Further information on progress of HEEPS:ABS 2017.18 was outlined in the report.

In relation to the Proposed Programme for 2018/19, the Panel was informed that it was proposed to provide any HEEPS:ABS funding the council was awarded to support home owners where the council would be doing EWI to its own households of No Fines construction in the Deans area.

Officers had identified these properties requiring EWI in order to improve their energy efficiency performance in order to achieve compliance with the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH). A Capital budget of £1.726m for 225 WLC properties had been approved for these works.

It was proposed to prioritise funding to households in the streets that were identified to have the highest probability of households living in fuel poverty. It was proposed to prioritise funding to streets in the order below.

1. Lenzie Avenue
2. Kenmore Avenue
3. Elie Avenue
4. Jubilee Avenue
5. Deanswood Park
6. Huntly Avenue

It was recommended that the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services retained delegated powers over the management of the programme for non-substantive changes, following approval of the programme by Council Executive.

The Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services concluded that the council continued to successfully deliver the HEEPS:ABS scheme to help alleviate fuel poverty in West Lothian and officers had proposed minor changes in the way the scheme was managed in order to maximise the benefit from the funding received. The report was based on the information provided from Scottish Government and on the current situation with regards to SEEP and HEEPS:ABS which was subject to change.

It was recommended that the Panel

1. note that the final funding allocation for the 2017/18 HEEPS:ABS programme was £975, 859;
2. note that the Scottish Government had yet to officially launch the Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP) which would include HEEPS:ABS so funding for 2018/19 had not been finalised.
3. note that it was proposed to increase the contribution to the EWI works from private home owners;
4. note that it was proposed to provide HEEPS:ABS funding to home owners in the Deans area in conjunction with the EWI work the council would be doing to its own stock;
5. note the recommendation for the continuation of delegated powers to the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services for non-substantive changes following approval of the 2018/19 programme by Council Executive; and
6. note that the views of the Panel would be reported to Council Executive when it was asked to consider the proposed approach.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

11. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services examining the current performance on performance indicators that were the responsibility of the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel was informed that of the eight performance indicators, 5 were categorised as green, 2 were amber and 1 was showing as red. The position for Q3 was the same from the report for Q2 in December 2017.

Each indicator in the appendix displayed the latest note which offered an explanation from the service on current performance levels.

The Panel was asked to note the current performance on Housing, customer and Building Services key performance indicators and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

12. WORKPLAN 2018

A copy of the Workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the Workplan.